

MEDIATE THIS !

NIMBY VS. YIMBY: BRIDGING THE DIVIDE OF BOUNDARIES

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

Most of the disputes we mediate at the National Conflict Resolution Center involve individuals at odds with relatives, neighbors and co-workers. We use the same toolkit to help all our clients move past interpersonal strife by listening carefully, thinking differently and working sincerely to find common ground. In this polarized society, we often are asked if our toolkit can untangle larger group conflicts over political or economic clashes. One such standoff has prompted a recurring question: Is there any way to bridge the NIMBY-YIMBY land use divide and bring both sides together to make their communities stronger?

The war between the so-called NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) and YIMBY (Yes In My Back Yard) factions is a nationwide pitched battle. Such skirmishes over real estate are hardly new. People have been fighting over this planet's finite land mass since we crawled from the sea and began striding on firm ground.

For most of human history, land wars were all about property possession. The NIMBY-YIMBY fracas is different. It's about property construction, about quantity and size and location of new buildings, whether they will adequately

serve burgeoning needs for new housing, and how they will impact residents of existing housing.

Given 21st-century human ingenuity, you might think an algorithm or strategy factoring in design and scale could hit the sweet spot of land use development that balances competing needs and interests.

That is a worthy goal, and it seems within reach. But first, we must undertake the primary tasks of every conflict resolution scenario. We must use the toolkit to free people from emotional traps and cognitive errors.

Here are some tips on brokering a NIMBY-YIMBY truce, assuming (as we do) there might be value in such a détente.

The first step is gathering information. One would begin by meeting with stakeholder groups, including developers, current residents, elected officials, city planners, and advocacy groups on such issues as transportation, economic development, environmental sustainability, and historic and green space preservation.

These gatherings would reveal the underlying interests of each group -- not their political bargaining positions but their genuine human needs and priorities. The forums also would help identify people with the authority and



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This week's column discusses ways to find common ground among neighboring land-use proponents and opponents.

temperament to represent their groups at the next stage.

A follow-up series of dialogues with group representatives would open with an icebreaker question: What are some of your fondest memories of the city where you live? This exercise would demonstrate to all parties that their core community values are surprisingly aligned.

At the next meeting, one would form small task forces that focus on specific underlying issues. Each

would include one representative of every stakeholder group. Those diverse members would be assigned to brainstorm ideas to address their issue.

A mysterious chemistry takes over when people collaborate across pre-existing boundaries. They recombine from implacable adversaries to problem solvers whose collective wisdom can break through gridlock.

Our society has become divided in part because polarization

is addictive. It gives us an adrenaline rush. We have justice and truth on our side, and our opponents are vile! That mindset is a short road to the lose-lose outcome where land use battles seem to be headed.

In his book "The Conflict Paradox: Seven Dilemmas at the Core of Disputes," conflict resolution pioneer Bernard Mayer warns that "the higher the stakes, the greater our tendency to view these polarities in a more primitive or immature way." The solution, he writes, is that "both sides ... must be embraced," and that happens when all parties exhibit "intellectual and emotional maturity."

A final thought: Maybe we should dump the NIMBY-YIMBY labels. There is no rational argument that we should "build nothing nowhere" or "build anything anywhere," and really, has anyone said that? Let's keep the focus on OUR back yard and how we can join forces to keep it thriving.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as president of the San Diego-based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003. Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution? Share your story with The Mediator via email at mediateatthis@ncrconline.com or as an online submission by visiting www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis. Submissions will be kept anonymous.

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

OUTDOORS: ERNIE COWAN

Visiting San Diego's enchanted forest

The shrouding fog draped like a blanket of silence over the damp forest creating a fairy-tale mood where you might expect to spy a curious gnome peeking from beneath a toadstool.

It was that kind of day. The dampness had silenced the forest. Leaves did not crunch as I walked, and the fog seemed to absorb all sound. It was peaceful, silent, magical and transformative, taking me back to a time when fairy tales were as important as the evening news.

Fresh spring leaves on budding lupine were decorated in tiny gems of dew like ornaments on a miniature Christmas tree as I drove up the mountain last week. The fresh new leaves on the poison oak were even more shiny because of the dampness.

This might sound like a scene from rainforests of the Northwest, but it was one of those rare, foggy days on Palomar Mountain when the forest becomes an enchanted wonderland.

It wasn't just the fog and dampness. It was also the budding spring flowers and the emerging season of plenty in one of San Diego County's most beautiful places. Anticipation filled the air and the fog was like a shroud that would soon be removed for a grand unveiling.

Summer crowds have yet to flock to the higher elevations where they come to enjoy this tiny enclave of forest filled with tall trees, pine scent and whispering breezes.

Foggy days are not common in San Diego's mountains, but I had decided on a weekday visit to Palomar Mountain State Park despite a prediction of clouds and rain. I was about the only one who did.

There was only one camper in the park according to rangers when I checked in. I had the mountain mostly to myself.

A trail meandered through tall trees and disappeared into the misty fog. Towering cedars rose skyward, only to vanish in a cloud. It was soft, mysterious, enchanting and inviting.

The forest is coming to life. Ferns are sprouting, fresh green leaves are emerging on the black oaks and poison oak and the dust of pine pollen is collected where it was carried by moving water from recent rains.

As I came down the path there was something in the distance that caught my eye. Through the misty veil there was a cluster of curious white spots, seemingly suspended in the foggy air.

In a forest muted by fog, distant objects were but hints of what they might be. I had never seen anything quite like this.



ERNIE COWAN

Dew drops add to the magic.

Moving closer, the view came into focus. The white spots were actually the large white flowers of blooming dogwood trees.

I was moved by the scene. It was one of those times I find hard to describe, in fact it reminded me of advice I was once given to "live for those moments in nature that you can't put into words."

This was just such a moment. Not a breathtaking sunrise, or overpowering geography like the yawning Grand Canyon filled with storms, but something oddly different, simple and unique.

As I stood in amazement, the fog would drift in and out, slowly changing the view from clear to hazy to surreal as the flowers came into focus or returned to just mysterious white spots suspended in mid-air.

The spell was broken as the heavy fog began to turn into a light rain. It was time to leave solitude and enchantment behind and return to civilization.

Soon, foggy days will have vanished to be replaced with warm, summer sunshine, kids with dirt on their hands having wholesome fun, campfire smoke, trout being caught at Doane Pond, croaking bullfrogs, scolding blue jays, sleeping in tents, and gleeful discoveries that will stay with you for a lifetime.

The more adventurous may do night hikes, discovering sights and sound and a world quite different from what the daytime hiker encounters.

Tired campers will gather around evening campfires and listen to tall tales or ghost stories told by the older, more experienced "outdoorsmen."

Summer will be a magical season as well, but the forest just won't be as enchanted without fog.

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THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

Transparency on business column

Neil Senturia is an entrepreneur and book author who writes a weekly column for the Union-Tribune on entrepreneurship, venture capital and leadership. It appears Mondays on the front of the business section. He's also married to San Diego Councilwoman Barbara Bry, who intends to run for mayor next year.

Senturia's column last Monday was on women and leadership. The headline was "Why are so many men incompetent leaders?"

The column's subject and his marriage prompted a response on the U-T subscribers' Facebook page from former Assemblywoman Lori Saldaña. She posted a link to the story.

"Interesting how the author of this commentary fails to mention that he is married to a woman running for mayor of San Diego," wrote Saldaña, who unsuccessfully ran for mayor in 2016 and for the county Board of Supervisors in 2018.

Should Senturia's column have a note tagged on at the end that says he's married to Bry, a councilwoman and mayoral candidate?

Although openness is certainly a good thing, I believe a note would be necessary only if the subject matter deals with San Diego politics, issues before the City Council or the mayor's race.

While Monday's column on leadership could be argued that it might support Bry, since she is a woman in a leadership position, I think that's a reach.

"It's a good question, and it would be easy to add his wife's affiliation to his tagline," said business editor Diana Chiyo McCabe. "Some would say that is being transparent. But her job has nothing to do with the column. Neil Senturia doesn't write about local politics. His column deals with business strategy, entrepreneurs and venture capitalism."

"Adding her political aspirations to his column is tantamount to running a political ad each week."

"So for these reasons, I haven't included her name, job title or political goals in his column tagline," McCabe said.

Readers flag opinionated tone

Two readers emailed the U-T with complaints over the same paragraph in a New York Times story that appeared at the top of the front page May 6. The readers said the

paragraph's tone sounded like opinion.

The story was on fighting that occurred May 5 between Israel and Gaza.

The paragraph read like this: "The outbreak of violence appears to have begun on Friday, when a sniper wounded two Israeli soldiers, a violent but localized expression of Palestinian impatience with Israel's failure to alleviate dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza."

Reader Bruce Kesler of Encinitas wondered how would the writers and editors know the sniper's motivation. He said what it indicates is the motivation of the Times' editors.

I agree the paragraph had an editorial tone.

I contacted the New York Times' Reader Center about the paragraph and the readers' complaints. (The Reader Center began in May 2017, the same month the Times released its last public editor.)

Lela Moore from the Reader Center responded:

"I'm sorry to hear that our reporting is being perceived as too opinionated for a news story in our report on the violence between Israel and Gaza. Readers' thoughts on our coverage frequently inform and influence our future reporting."

"The source for the paragraph you quoted is identified later in the story: 'The fury of the weekend's fighting reflected pent-up Palestinian frustrations over Israel's slow pace in easing restrictions that have sent the densely populated and impoverished territory into economic free fall, said Tareq Baconi, an analyst with the International Crisis Group.'"

"Perhaps we should have made it clearer that Mr. Baconi's opinions were the source for that particular paragraph earlier in the story."

Yes, I believe that the writers should have added the attribution to that paragraph.

Readers should know that news service stories — New York Times, Associated Press and the like — can be edited by U-T editors as they see fit.

In this case, I believe the second half of that sentence should have been deleted. The paragraph later in the story attributed to Tareq Baconi would have presented an opinion from a source, as compared with sounding as if it came from reporters.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

1912: JULIA CLARK WOULD RATHER FLY THAN EAT

On May 19, 1912, Julia Clark qualified for a pilot's certificate at the Curtiss school of aviation on North Island. She was the first woman to graduate from the school and received the third pilot's license ever issued to a woman from the Aero Club of America.

Less than a month later, on June 17, Clark was killed during a practice flight at the Illinois state fairgrounds when one wing of her Curtiss biplane struck a small limb of a tree. Clark was the third pilot from the class of 1912 to meet with a serious accident, after R.E. McMillan of Perry, Iowa, and J.D. Spaulding of Brattleboro, Vt.

From The San Diego Union, May 20, 1912:

WOMAN GRANTED AIRSHIP LICENSE

Four Pupils at Curtiss School Qualify as Professional Aviators.

Three new aviators and one aviatrix have been added to the list of professional flyers at the Curtiss aviation school on North Island, the test flights being made Saturday and yesterday before Prof. H. La V. Twinning, representing the Aero Club of America, and a corps of assistants appointed to observe the flights for licenses.

Those who qualified, and who are now licensed professional aviators are Miss Julia Clark of Chicago, Carl T. Sjolander of San Francisco, R.H. Russell of Toronto, Canada, and J.T. Barlow of Los Angeles.

This examination practically closes the Curtiss school for the season, as only three pupils remain, and these, it is anticipated, will be ready for license test flights within the next two weeks.

Of those who successfully finished the course Saturday, Miss Clark is probably the only one who will begin professional flying within the next few days. She has been signed by the aviation circus, under the management of William H. Pickins, promoter of the recent San Diego meet, which opens in Peoria, Ill., next Saturday.

It will be remembered by those who attended the last San Diego aviation meet that Miss Clark was entered in the events, but did not fly because of unfavorable weather conditions. She has since progressed in gaining higher altitudes, and in governing her craft in a wind, and those who saw her cutting double figure eights Saturday morning will have no doubt of her ability to successfully compete with any of the sterner sex in the



navigation of the air.

R.H. Russell plans to return to Toronto immediately to engage in exhibition work there, and has already arranged to provide himself with a machine. Mr. Russell has been unfortunate in some ways since he first began his instructions at Hammondspoint, N.Y., as it was while taking the course there that he met with injuries in a railway accident which interrupted his aerial work for many months and nearly cost him his life.

Carl T. Sjolander will probably enter the Curtiss employ as an expert, as his familiarity with the mechanism of the Curtiss motor, and other parts of the air craft of that inventor, make him a valuable addition to the staff.

J.E. Barlow's plans are unsettled, further than that he will at once purchase a machine and enter the exhibition field.

From The San Diego Union, Sunday, February 11, 1912:

REPRESENTATIVES OF FOUR NATIONS ARE STUDENTS IN CURTISS AVIATION SCHOOL

Woman Declares She Would Rather Stay in Machine Than Eat.

Glenn H. Curtiss found it necessary yesterday to establish an additional aviation camp on North Island because of the increasing number of pupils at his public school, which has grown beyond even his expectations and which has become practically an international institution. This latter fact is evidenced by the presence among the pupils of four students from foreign countries.

Captain Capisini, the first foreigner in the game here, is a Greek, studying in order to teach the Greek army the art of flying. M. Kondo, a Japanese, from Santa Barbara, is a pupil and as silent about his intentions aeronautically. A. Schaeff, from France, mastered the Antoinette monoplane before he came here to learn the Curtiss biplane. And recently Captain Fats, a native of Turkey, came here from Los Angeles.

Among the new pupils is Mrs. Julia Clark of Chicago, who was accepted as a pupil of Aviator "Lucky Bob" St. Henry. She is taking flights daily with St. Henry and has once or twice been allowed to operate the machine herself, though it is only with her teacher that she "gets off the ground."

"When I can fly the machine myself five feet off the ground, I'll feel that I'm a real aviatrix," she said yesterday. Again, when she was called to luncheon, after several flights, she persisted in more flying, replying that she "would rather fly than eat."

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